AS THE CURTAIN FALLS

ON a sultry afternoon during the first week in August, I stood in the front room of a simple little country house about ten miles west of the city to see a commanding officer of a nearby air base bestow three posthumous medals of honor on the mother of one of my former students. Jim Miller—that was not his name but I shall call him that—a bombardier in a North African Flying unit, had been shot down over Tunisia in January; and according to the official report, no member of the bomber's crew survived. Now, in the sultry August heat, I was to see Jim's mother receive his medals—the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Army Air Medal, and three oakleaf clusters.

As I drove up to the well cared for little farmhouse, I felt rather uneasy. I had never met Mrs. Miller, although at the time the official communique of Jim's death had been published in the newspaper, I had written her a note. In the course of several days I had had an answer; and then again the last of July, I had received her special invitation: "I want you to be here for the brief ceremony. Jim was so fond of you, and he would want you here. I hope you can come."

Still and all, I felt uneasy on my mission. I parked my car down the roadway several hundred yards from the Miller house, the last car in a long line belonging to Jim's relatives and many friends. As I walked slowly, almost hesitatingly up the hot concrete road, my mind went back several years to the time when Jim had sat in my classes. He had been a lanky farm boy of splendid parentage and honest background. His tousled hair crowned a fearless face from which deep blue eyes seemed to laugh all the time. He had been an above average student, one of those rare students interested in learning better ways to write this, to organize that, to speculate on meanings, and to get all he could out of a fifty minute period. I had liked Jim for his frankness, his unabashed rural ways. He had sent me a card from camp before he went into battle zone; and although I had answered it, he had not written again. I had thought of all these things as I neared his mother's front gate.

Suddenly I realized the front yard was buzzing with people all dressed in their Sunday best. As I worked my way toward the group, a short man in shirt sleves came up to me.

"Are you Professor Dumble?" he asked rather cautiously.

When I assured him of my identity and hoped he would not hold it against me, he replied proudly:

"I'm Jim's Uncle Jake, and Jim's mother wants to see you. She wants you to stand by her when the Colonel gives her Jim's citations."

Somewhat bewildered, I thanked him, and he led the way onto the porch and into the front room. It was a small room, but wonderfully comfortable. Its several chairs had been pushed back against the walls to make way for the ten or twelve people standing about. Mrs. Miller, smiling, a large old fashioned palm leaf fan in her hand, sat on the edge of one of the chairs. As we approached she arose.

"Jen, this is Professor ———."

"I'm so glad you could come, and I want you right here in this room. Do you mind? It's such a hot day I feared many of Jim's friends would stay away. But it 'pears to me a lot of them came."

There was something quiet in Mrs. Miller's tone—quiet, composed, calm. In a much more excited voice than the one she used, I assured her I was glad to be with her. Then, she introduced me to Jim's Aunt Minnie and Uncle Jack and Aunt Em. In them, in them all, I saw the roots of Jim's fineness, the sincerity of those bright twinkling blue eyes. Instinctively, immediately, I felt at home.

The conversation, not about Jim, was general. Was it hot in the city? Was I teaching the summer term? Did we have many students? Had the Army "taken over"? I was in the midst of answering these queries when the screen door opened and the Colonel with his aide entered. Uncle Jake was conducting him to Mrs. Miller; and as master of ceremonies, Uncle Jake introduced the Colonel and the lieutenant first to Mrs. Miller, then to the relatives, then to me. After a few minutes of brow mopping and quiet laughter, the Colonel asked Mrs. Miller if she were ready to receive the awards. Already the friends on the lawn were gathering on the porch at the open door and windows. Yes, she was ready, and with unfaltering step she moved several paces to stand between Uncle Jake and me.

In its few simple words, the Colonel read the citation, and taking the ribbons—oh, they were

(Continued on page 28)

AS THE CURTAIN FALLS

(Continued from page 13)

beautiful and bright and colorful—he pinned them on Mrs. Miller's dress over her heart. Then he shook hands, smilingly said a few words about Jim and his heroic deeds—words to which Jim I'm sure would have replied, "oh, heck"—asked her to call the Air Base and he would arrange for her to be shown about, and quietly left the room with his lieutenant.

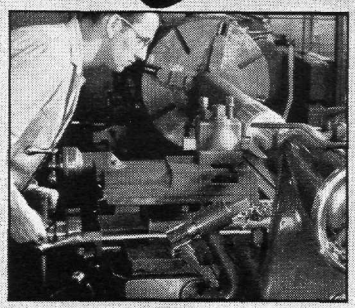
This was all so sudden, so simple, so beautiful, so dignified, actually so gay—Jim would have wanted it that way, Mrs. Miller told me later—that I could scarcely believe what had taken place before my eyes. Then Mrs. Miller took her place in the corner of the room beside a small book case and shook hands with all Jim's and her relatives and friends. Since I was one of the first to greet her, I wandered about the room, not noticing for a few minutes, the fine large photograph of Jim on the top of the small bookcase. Then, letting my eyes fall to the books on the shelves, I saw something that riveted my attention. It was the series of books that had belonged to the dead soldier. There they were, several textbooks among them: an algebra, French's *Engineering Drawing,* Hildreth and Dumble's *Five Contemporary American Plays;* there I stopped. Jim had preserved my book that he had used in my course.

Slipping up behind Mrs. Miller, I took "Hildreth and Dumble" from the shelf. As I opened it, several old notes fell from it, notes in Jim's handwriting. I noticed they were all placed at one page, a page containing the dialogue before the final curtain of Robert E. Sherwood's "Idiot's Delight." Some of the dialogue was underscored, and in the margin of the page, in Jim's boyish handwriting, were scribbled these words:

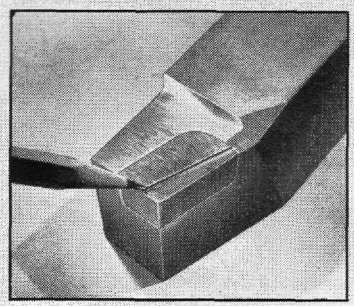
" 'Logical ending: Author could not have handled situation differently. As Irene lived, so did she die. Same with Van.'—Dumble."

Then, with pounding heart and perspiring palm, I read Jim's underscoring of the text on the printed page; and probably, for the first time, despite its many readings to my classes, I understood it as I have never understood it before.—Wilson R. Dumble.

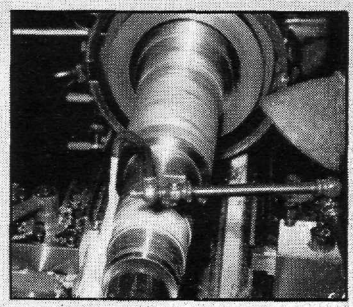
6 STEPS TOWARD TOP PERFORMANCE, WITH CARBIDES, WHEN YOU *CUT STEEL*



CUT AT HIGH SPEEDS—For top performance on the average steel-cutting job, don't cut at speeds less than 200 *feet* per minute. Slow speeds often cause failure.

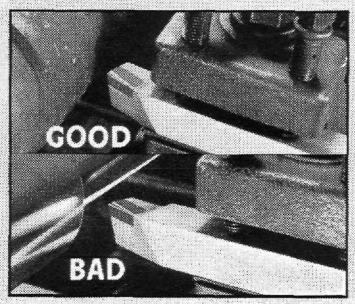


USE CORRECT CHIP BREAKER—When you break chips, break them right. Fit breaker to the job. The ground-in step-type shown is usually best.

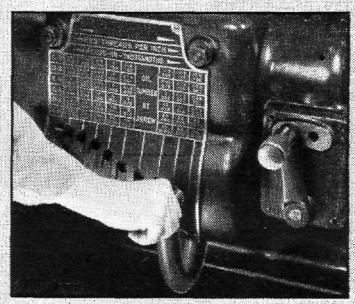


COOLANT—*IF* you use a coolant, provide a heavy, continuous stream, preferably under pressure. If you can't provide ample coolant, it is better to cut dry.

KEEP TOOLS SHARP—Avoid running tools until excessively dull. This causes breakage or drastically shortened tool life. Grind tools at regular intervals for best results.



PROVIDE RIGID SET-UP—Keep tools at absolute minimum overhang necessary to clear work. Chuck part firmly. Rigidity is important with carbides.



FEEDS—For medium and heavy cuts on steel, use feed not less than .010" per revolution, and preferably .015" to .025". Light feeds "rub" tool, causing rapid dulling.

● Important in getting top performance, when cutting steel with carbides, are the six steps shown above. When correctly applied, carbide tools produce results far surpassing the performance of ordinary tools. They operate at machine speeds as high as 4 to 5 times faster than ordinary tools, stay sharp up to 10 times longer, and increase output often as much as 300%.

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